

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address recent reports that I believe signal a conflict in Azeri President Ilham Aliyev's interest in promoting a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I am particularly troubled by reports from the BBC last week that President Aliyev said that, while he would continue to try to resolve the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict by peaceful means, the Azeri army is able at any moment to free what he called "our territory." The article continues that President Aliyev stated, "We have every right to do that, to restore our territorial integrity."

Such statements, Mr. Speaker, are unsettling and send a message to Armenia as well as to all those involved in working towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict that Azerbaijan is prepared to undertake a military approach to addressing the conflict should recommendations by the Minsk Group not agree with Azerbaijan's position. In fact, such statements, I believe, Mr. Speaker, send the wrong message to the Minsk Group and undermine ongoing efforts regarding stabilization of the South Caucasus region.

Ten years after a mutually signed cease-fire in the region and 3 years after President Kocharian and former President Aliyev came together at Key West, current Azeri President Aliyev has warned that if no concrete issues remain on the agenda regarding a peaceful resolution to Nagorno-Karabagh, then it is "not right to continue and imitate negotiations." President Aliyev's actions and statements do not signal a willingness to negotiate and, in fact, I think they illustrate the opposite. If there is any chance that the parties can move in the direction of a peaceful resolution, President Aliyev must show that he is willing to consider options developed by the Minsk Group without threatening military actions.

In this regard, I would like to highlight from the BBC article that Mr. Aliyev added that the Azeri government's expenditure on Azerbaijan's military was increasing each year and "it will keep increasing in the future." I am discouraged by this, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to address this issue in light of the U.S.'s role in providing military assistance in the region.

I strongly believe we must do everything in our power here in Congress to signal that we will not support the use of military force to address this conflict. Specifically, I call upon Congress and congressional appropriators to restore the military aid parity between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Earlier this year, President Bush's budget proposed including unequal military aid spending to Armenia and Azerbaijan. This request was contrary to a policy agreement between the Congress and the administration that there would be military parity between

the two countries. While the administration believes that the unequal funding will not destroy the balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia, I point to President Aliyev's recent statements and question the Bush administration's recent assurances to Congress before the other Chamber's Foreign Relations Committee.

I would like to point out that waiver language included in section 907 of the Freedom Support Act specifically states that any assistance to Azerbaijan should not be used to undermine or hamper the Karabakh peace process or be used for offensive purposes against Armenia or the Armenian communities in the South Caucasus. President Aliyev's comments regarding current and future increases in Azerbaijan's military funding do not put me at ease that funding from the U.S. either directly or indirectly will not be used to unleash a military campaign against the people of Nagorno-Karabagh.

Amid rising tension and animosity in the region, it is more important today than ever for the United States to be sure that no signal is sent suggesting that one side is being provided a military advantage over the other. Our strength in fostering a diplomatic and peaceful solution is our balanced approach to and for each nation of the South Caucasus. At this time the U.S. should not be providing resources to Azerbaijan that can in any measure be turned into military efforts against Armenia to reclaim Nagorno-Karabagh.

Parity in this regard will help to restore a sense of stability in the region and hopefully add to the U.S.'s evenhandedness in its presence and support for the establishment of a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. McCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PENCE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE WAR ON TERRORISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be joined by my colleague from Georgia this evening. What we would like to do is to talk a little bit about the war on terrorism, the situation in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan. We want to start off by providing an answer to some of our colleagues from the other side of the aisle who have been asking the question, In 2004, are we better off than we were 4 years ago? In many ways as we have talked about this issue, we need to recognize and put it in the context of September 11, 2001. For the first time, America has a real and serious response to the war on terrorism. During the 1990s, were we better off in the 1990s as we were attacked in the World Trade Centers in the early 1990s? As our embassies were attacked in Africa? As our barracks were attacked in Saudi Arabia? And as the USS *Cole* was attacked in Yemen, but America did not respond? Was that a good position for us to be in? We found out the cost of neglecting the threat, the emerging threat of global terrorism on September 11. We found out what it would cost us not to have responded during the 1990s.

As this threat emerged, an administration, perhaps even we in Congress, said, this is not a threat that needs a serious focus. We now have an administration, a President, and a Congress that were united in our response to September 11. We said we do face a real threat. We face a global war on terrorism. We face a global war on terrorism that had been emerging throughout the 1990s, but had never been responded to. Now is the time to respond because it is a real threat and it is a threat that we need to take seriously and it is a threat that we need to respond to by taking the war to the terrorists.